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Youth Factors and Labour Market Experience in Job Satisfaction

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What makes for satisfaction with life in general and with particular facets of life, such as those concerned with work, and counterpart feelings such as negative affect or depression have long been of interest to social scientists. One key question is whether these satisfactions and feelings are all parts of a personal or social predisposition to see things in positive or negative terms or whether we can identify distinct situational factors that underlie different forms of satisfaction. Moreover do these expressions fluctuate spasmodically in accordance with changes in external factors or gradually shift in accordance with long-term changing externalities? This paper focuses on two aspects of the conundrum. First, job satisfaction, compared across cohorts and genders, with a view to establishing what its components really are and whether they are changing. In addition we investigate Malaise, a general expression of a psychological state broadly aligned with what clinical psychologists describe as depression. We link both of these components of psychological state to general life satisfaction – the over arching view we have of our place in the world and our feelings about it.

Literature on job satisfaction

There have been several different avenues of research into job satisfaction:

- The sources of job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction and how they differ from one another, both in terms of one's general overall feeling with the job as well as with different features of it.

- The gender differences in the particular aspects of employment that are valued by men and women.

- The direct influence of job satisfaction on work outcomes.

- The relationship of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction with broader psychological dispositions has been examined.

1) Sources of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction

Although there is some relationship between working conditions and job satisfaction the factors identified in the literature that produce satisfaction and dissatisfaction are less concerned with the physical conditions of work than the way the individual experiences

employment in the particular organisation supplying the job. This includes how they relate to their fellow workers and their work environment, the group working relationships they experience, the size and constitution of the organisation, promotional prospects or prospects of alternative employment and managerial hierarchy (Warr, 1971; Warr and Wall 1975). In one study individuals performing the same task were found to have widely varying levels of job satisfaction. Here fulfilment was found to originate from feelings of autonomy and significance rather than the task itself (O'Brien, 1986). Notably, satisfaction is higher among part-time workers (typically women). Perhaps this is because part-time work is undertaken more frequently on a voluntary or part-voluntary basis since it mostly supplies a second household income (Hakim, 1996).

Only partly mirroring the sources of satisfaction, dissatisfaction tends to be more closely related to such features of jobs as role ambiguities and role conflicts in work. Heavy workload may also be a factor as may be poor supervision, lack of personal control over tasks to be performed, a poor working environment and a mismatch of skills to tasks Feelings that capabilities are matched to the requirements of a job are likely to forestall boredom, anxiety and worry that lead to dissatisfaction (O'Brien, 1986). Hertzberg (1966) quoted in Brown (1988) terms these latter characteristics of a job, 'hygiene factors' – the necessary, but by no means sufficient conditions, for high performance. It is the satisfaction factors that supply the (intrinsic) motivation for performance of the job.

Though there is some communality between these negative and positive facets of jobs, the difference between them does question whether there is one single dimension of job satisfaction-dissatisfaction along which people can be ordered. Rather, satisfaction should be viewed as multi-dimensional, with a different set of negative as opposed to positive dimensions. However, in line with much research in this field for the purposes of this paper, we study job satisfaction as a single dimension.

2) Gender differences

Gender differences in the sources and levels of satisfaction with work are reliably reported in the literature. In surveys on the facets of work that appeal to men and women, consistently men place pay and promotion high in their scale of job values, whereas women tend to stress more the relational aspects of work especially their feelings about the people they work with, a friendly atmosphere and a good working environment (Metcalf, 1997; Hakim, 1996). Women also report higher satisfaction levels

with work in general. This may be due to the fact that many women work part time and part time workers generally feel more satisfied, as noted above. It may also be related to the fact that women more frequently report a wider range of positive emotions than men (Metcalf, 1997), which sharpens their views about work.

However, the different research approaches to studying work orientations for men and women have been criticised with Purcell (1988), for example, arguing that the differences claimed in work values between men and women today are typically exaggerated. Comparative research by Hofstede (1994) shows that the differences between men and women's work orientations varies by country according to gender ideology. Those countries where men and women are closest in the roles exercised at home and at work show the least differences in the factors accounting for job satisfaction.

3) Relationship with work outcomes

We might intuitively suppose that the level of satisfaction would have a direct influence on the performance, efficiency and production outcomes of work. However, research done in this area shows that this is not always the case. Correlations of job satisfaction are often quite low with absenteeism and performance. But despite this, they are fairly substantial with staff turnover. Thus when people reach a certain threshold of dissatisfaction they will be motivated to leave but not to under-perform, although of course sometimes the evidence for this will come from a rationalisation of a decision already taken (Reichel, 1993).

4) Psychological disposition

Occupational psychologists have noted the relationship between general psychological dispositions and job satisfaction (Metcalf, 1997). Much of this work is cast in terms of the psychologist Maslow's hierarchical theory of needs (Brown, 1988). Thus people, who are generally depressed in their everyday lives or prone to high anxiety, are more likely to express dissatisfaction with the job they are currently doing and to be less satisfied with life generally. This raises the further question as to what extent general life satisfaction on the one hand and general psychological state on the other impinges on satisfaction with a particular job.

In this paper we attempt both to test these reported relationships between job satisfaction and other factors on large-scale data and also to take them further, drawing upon large-scale longitudinal survey data to take into account a wider range of factors that may be implicated in job satisfaction than have typically been examined in previous research. Through the use of longitudinal data in two birth cohorts we shall also be able to get a better purchase on cause and effect in the relationships involved. More specifically the aim is to relate satisfaction with work to more general attributes such as social class and education and aspects of youth transitions, taking into account conditions of life experienced earlier. We investigate separately and in combination three dependent variables: job satisfaction (relating to current job), general life satisfaction (how well the individual appraises their life so far) and Malaise (a psychological variable relating to symptoms of depression).

Methods

Our findings are based on data collected in two longitudinal birth cohort studies: the 1970 birth cohort study which began with the 17,000 babies born in the week 4-11 April, 1970, who have been followed up subsequently at ages 5, 10, 16, 26 and most recently, 30. The second study is the 1958 birth cohort study (also known as the National Child Development Study), which is based on a comparable sample of all babies born in the week 5-12 March 1958 and followed up subsequently at ages 7, 11, 16, 23, 33 and most recently, at age 42.

Measures

Each study has collected a wealth of data on early circumstances and educational performance, together with the types of job entered in adulthood (Bynner, Ferri and Shepherd, 1997; Ferri, 1993). In the adult surveys, there were also measures of *depression* obtained through the 'Malaise inventory' (Rutter et al, 1970) at ages 16, 26 and 30 (BCS70) and at ages 23, 33 and 42 (NCDS). The scale used comprised 24 items to which individuals were asked to respond, "yes" or "no" as describing their current feelings about themselves[1]. A score of 8 or more is generally taken to indicate a potentially clinical level of depression, although in this analysis we use the scale in its full, continuous form. *Life satisfaction* was measured at 33 and 42 in NCDS and comprised ratings on a single continuous 'analogue' scale with 10 gradations on which the respondent was asked to indicate how strongly dissatisfied or satisfied they were with their life so far. In BCS70, life satisfaction was

[1] The scale was scored differently at age 16 in the BCS70 allowing adolescents the choice between "never" "sometimes" and "often" in their response to the 24 different items. For this reason the inventories are not always comparable and consequently analyses do not always facilitate the 16-year data.

measured in the same way at age 30. *Job satisfaction* was measured by a single 5-point scale expressing 'strongly satisfied', 'somewhat satisfied', 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied', 'dissatisfied', 'very dissatisfied' and was measured at age 26 and 30 in BCS70 and at ages 33 and 42 in NCDS.

The other variables brought into the analysis to help explain the origins of these orientations are shown in Table 1 below. They draw on the full range of longitudinal data available to us in the birth cohort studies, including measures at birth, ages 10 and 11, through secondary schooling (including qualifications), the school to work transition and into employment.

Table 1: Control variables used in the multivariate analysis

Early Life	RG Social class of father at birth (UK Registration General's classification) Mother's age when she left full time education Ethnic Group
Childhood (age 10/11*)	Reading score Maths score Crowding in the home Free school meals received Parental interest in the child's education
Adulthood* **	Self employment status Current RG social class Employment sector (public vs.private) Age left full time continuous education (continuous variable) Highest qualification Malaise Score** Promotional prospects of current job** Current job security** Whether job interferes with home and family life**

* Survey carried out at age 11 in the NCDS and at age 10 in the BCS70.
** Only used as a control variables in the regressions on job satisfaction.
***Adulthood defined at the same adult age at which the outcome measure was assessed.

Descriptive analysis

We first display the attributes of the satisfaction measures and depression measures descriptively comparing scores for men and women across the different cohorts. We also examine the stability of the measures across time and the interrelationships among them. Next, we turn to the components of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction themselves,

examining the relationships between a number of facets of the current job, as measured at age 30 in BCS70 and age 42 in NCDS, with the job satisfaction measure.

Multivariate analysis

Using this information to decide which components of jobs need to be included in the modelling of job satisfaction, we then undertake multivariate analysis using the OLS regression model, to examine the relationship first of Malaise to the job satisfaction measures then adding into the model: (1) factors relating to the job, (2) transitional variables measured during the change from school to work; (3) the variables measured at 10-11 and (4) those measured at birth. At each new stage, we observe the impact of the earlier life variables on the later ones already present in the model reaching an endpoint when all variables have been included. A particular focus is whether the relationships between Malaise and job satisfaction (as expressed in the unstandardized regression coefficient) are moderated by the earlier childhood variables. The overall proportion of variance in job satisfaction explained by the other variables in the model is also presented (R^2). Only the results for the final stage (where all factors are included) are presented. The analyses were carried out separately for men and women in each cohort.

The whole set of analyses were then repeated with Malaise as the dependent variable excluding those factors applicable only to job satisfaction (see Table 1).

Descriptive analysis

Cohort and gender shifts

First we compare mean scores on the different satisfaction and depression measures between men and women in the two cohorts (Table 2). The most notable finding for gender was the much higher scores women obtained than men in all cohorts and at all ages. This is consistent with other findings (Metcalf, 1997). It was also notable that generally scores for both men and women were higher in BCS70 than in NCDS suggesting a greater tendency towards depression in the more recent cohort. However, depression levels in NCDS rose from age 33 to 42 and by 42 were not hugely different from those at age 30 in BCS70. This suggests that over and above the cohort difference, there is also a period effect in the sense that respondents differing in age between 30 and 42 surveyed at the same time (1999/2000) share the same tendency towards enhanced depression.

In contrast to the findings for depression, for life satisfaction, women if anything, appeared generally to be more satisfied with their lives than men. For both men and women in the BCS70 life satisfaction increased between the ages of 26 and 30. In the NCDS cohort members life satisfaction decreased between 33 and 42 for both sexes. This 'peak' of life satisfaction in the early thirties indicates that these cohort members were at the point of being most satisfied after their twenties and before mid-life. There is less evidence of a period effect in these measures as the changes are moving in opposite directions over calendar time.

Table 2: Mean scores for each outcome variable used in the analysis

OUTCOME	MEN			WOMEN			Scoring Method
	Sample Size	Mean	Std. Dev.	Sample Size	Mean	Std. Dev.	
1) Malaise Inventory							
1970 Cohort*							
Age 26	3357	3.20	3.13	4198	4.36	3.43	0-24
Age 30	5384	3.18	3.39	5724	3.87	3.54	0-24
1958 Cohort							
Age 23	5298	1.99	2.43	5496	3.37	3.12	0-24
Age 33	5570	2.06	2.73	5764	2.85	3.21	0-24
Age 42	5538	3.12	3.42	5740	4.06	3.77	0-24
2) Life satisfaction							
1970 Cohort							
Age 26	3366	7.08	1.93	4203	7.31	1.90	0-10
Age 30	5382	7.19	1.80	5720	7.39	1.89	0-10
1958 Cohort							
Age 33	5163	7.33	1.66	5468	7.50	1.78	0-10
Age 42	5537	7.23	1.80	5734	7.34	2.02	0-10
3) Job satisfaction							
1970 Cohort							
Age 30	4888	3.93	1.02	4246	4.03	1.00	1-5
1958 Cohort							
Age 23	4025	3.89	1.00	3327	4.04	0.97	1-5
Age 42	5070	3.95	1.03	4550	4.12	0.97	1-5

* Age 16 data for the BCS70 is not included as a different scoring method was used and thus the means are non-comparable.

For job satisfaction differences of this kind were far smaller. There was a slight tendency for women to express more satisfaction with their jobs than men did, and for this tendency to

increase slightly with age in the 1958 cohort. It was difficult though to discern any consistent pattern in the cohort differences and none of them reached statistical significance ($P< 0.05$).

Stability of attributes and their interrelationships.

To compare movement in the scores across time each set of scores was divided into quartile ranges (25% in each range). The number of times the respondent appeared in the most depressed or dissatisfied quartile was then calculated. This analysis was performed for job satisfaction in NCDS only, because there was only one observation in BCS70 and therefore mobility could not be assessed. The two ages used were 23 and 42. Similarly, mobility in life satisfaction was examined between 26 and 30 for BCS70 and between 33 and 42 for NCDS. For the Malaise scale three observations were available. Mobility was thus established for both cohorts for all three ages available (16, 26 and 30 in BCS70 and 23, 33 and 42 for NCDS) as well an analysis that limited it to two adult ages (26 and 30, 23 and 33) in order that comparisons might be made to the other measures under scrutiny.

For all measures and all analyses the great majority of respondents – about *two thirds* of the sample did not record depression or dissatisfaction in the top quartile range at any point at which the attribute was measured. This proportion was very consistent across cohorts and ages: 66% for job satisfaction in the NCDS, 62%, 66% for life satisfaction and 67% 66% for Malaise in BCS70 and NCDS respectively. Similarly, the proportions who were recorded to be on one occasion among the most dissatisfied or depressed were also very consistent between measures: 23% for job satisfaction, 25%, 23% for life satisfaction and 20%, 22% for Malaise. These figures left a relatively small but notably consistent number of people reporting high levels of dissatisfaction or depression on two occasions – between 11% and 13% for each measure. The results from mobility within the Malaise score over three ages showed a similar pattern: in BCS70 and NCDS respectively 58%, 61% were never in the top quartile, 24%, 20% were in the top quartile in one survey, in both cohorts 12% fell into the highest group on two occasions and 6%, 7% on all three.

These patterns suggest that the proportion of people who are consistently depressed or dissatisfied is quite small, less than 1 in 10 of the population. Equally a significant proportion of the population have experienced a high depression or dissatisfaction score at some point during their adult life, as measured by the cohort studies, indicating that far from being a fixed characteristic these satisfaction scores and psychological dispositions are episodic in nature and thus are likely to be influenced by the current situation.

As we might expect from the foregoing findings, measures of the same variable at different ages showed quite high stabilities, with product moment correlations, approximating 0.6 for adjacent ages (23 and 33, 33 and 42, NCDS; 26 and 30, BCS70). Even between ages 23 and 42 in NCDS a relatively high correlation was sustained at 0.47. There was also a relatively high degree of correlation across the different types of variable with life satisfaction at age 42 showing a relatively strong negative correlation with depression in the order of –0.30 for all ages, again in both studies. There was a lower level of positive correlation between life satisfaction and with job satisfaction: for NCDS, 0.16 (age 23), 0.18 (age 33) and 0.24 (age 42) and for BCS70, 0.17 (age 26) and 0.23 (age 30). This might be expected from the nature of the questions, the first of which focuses on general satisfaction in life so far, the second of which questions specific satisfaction with the current job of the individual. The relatively high inter-correlation across occasions for depression and life satisfaction suggests that these two variables are to a certain extent opposite measures of the same orientation – positive, as opposed to negative, 'affect' (Tomkins, 1992). In contrast job satisfaction stands more on its own, though it is also moderately correlated with life satisfaction. The variables can therefore be seen as forming two distinct clusters – job satisfaction measures on the one hand and depression or general satisfaction measures on the other.

Components of job satisfaction

Table 3 shows the correlations that were significant at the 5% level between job satisfaction and a number of features of the cohort members' current jobs. To simplify the next stage of the analysis, only correlations greater than 0.12 or more (shown in bold) were taken as of interest. The table shows that much the same characteristics emerged in both cohorts, though the sizes of the correlations varied. Promotion prospects and job security featured highly in both cohorts at much the same level for men. However for women in the more recent 1970 cohort promotion prospects were more strongly related to job satisfaction than they were for women in the 1958 cohort: a hint of the changing nature of women's orientation towards work. Job security was only marginally less correlated with job satisfaction for women than it was for men. In connection with the job interfering with a home and family, as we might expect, the correlation was substantially stronger for women than for men (though statistically significant for both sexes) and barely differed across cohorts.

Table 3: Correlation coefficients of current job satisfaction with attributes of current job

ATTRIBUTE	1958 cohort at 42		1970 cohort at 30	
	Men	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**
Promotion Prospects*	**0.25**	**0.15**	**0.29**	**0.20**
Job Security*	**0.19**	**0.16**	**0.16**	**0.15**
Emotionally demanding	*NS*	-0.04	0.08	*NS*
Interferes with home and family*	**-0.07**	**-0.14**	**-0.04**	**-0.12**
Preferred hours	-0.06	*NS*	*NS*	*NS*
Hourly wages	0.08	*NS*	0.07	*NS*
Hours worked	0.08	-0.04	0.08	-0.04

* Those variables in bold contain coefficients >=0.12 in at least one of the analyses for men and women and are thus included in the regression analysis.
NS – Non-significant at the 5% level. All other coefficients shown are significant.

Working hours and hourly wages showed statistically significant though relatively small correlations for men but not for women. Hours worked again showed statistically significant correlations but at a relatively low level, particularly for women. For women, in fact, the correlation was negative, i.e. the more hours worked, *the less* satisfied women were with the job, whereas for men, the correlation was positive, i.e. the more hours worked, *the more* satisfied the men were with the job. One other correlation also showed a reverse direction between men and women – an emotionally demanding job was *positively* correlated with job satisfaction for men in the 1970 cohort and negatively correlated with job satisfaction in the 1958 cohort for women.

Explaining depression and satisfaction

In order to explain the possible origins of these outcomes in adult life we carried out a multiple regression analysis, investigating the way in which different characteristics appeared to have an independent effect on the outcome measures in adulthood. The variables used for the analysis are discussed above and displayed in Table 1. We restricted the analysis to job satisfaction and depression because of the close negative relationship between general life satisfaction and depression. Malaise was selected for further analysis on the basis that it is a more precise measure of psychological well-being since it uses a battery of questions to form a scale rather than one simple question, as was the case for life satisfaction.

To test the hypothesis that the absence of depression would be an independent predictor of job satisfaction the Malaise score was included in the job satisfaction analysis. In the case of job satisfaction we also included the attributes of jobs that had the most significant correlations with satisfaction (from Table 3). We also restricted the analysis to people currently in work. The analysis was carried out separately for men and women in each cohort producing four analyses for each outcome in turn.

Table 4 shows the results of the analysis, giving the unstandardized regression coefficients for each dependent variable with each explanatory variable for men and women in BCS70 and NCDS. We also show the squared multiple correlation (R^2) which expresses the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that is explained by all the predictors in combination. The comments here are restricted to the final stage of the analysis.

Table 4: Multiple regression results for Malaise and job satisfaction

	MALAISE				JOB SATISFACTION			
	1970 cohort aged 30		1958 cohort aged 42		1970 cohort aged 30		1958 cohort aged 42	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Malaise score					**-0.050****	**-0.040****	**-0.049****	**-0.043****
Employment								
Employee	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Self Employed	**0.623***	0.292	0.093	-0.075	0.059	-0.032	**0.502***	-0.113
Not working	**3.216****	1.943	**1.633****	**0.264****				
Social class								
I	-0.544	-0.7	**-0.706****	**-1.080****	-0.052	0.109	0.064	**0.247***
II	-0.115	-0.177	**-0.657****	**-0.472***	0.057	0.138	0.009	0.129
III-nm	-0.375	-0.367	**-0.644****	**-0.626****	-0.173	0.017	-0.102	0.088
III-m	-0.368	-0.165	**-0.579****	**-0.496***	-0.042	0.128	-0.047	**0.212***
IV	-0.065	-0.121	**-0.498***	-0.19	-0.175	0.116	-0.108	**0.199***
V	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Type of job								
Private	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Public	0.054	**-0.252***	0.102	**-0.197***	**-0.119****	-0.026	**-0.165****	0.055
Promotion prospects								
No					-	-	-	-
Yes					**0.621****	**0.451****	**0.532****	**0.317****
Job security								
No					-	-	-	-
Yes					**0.264****	**0.256****	**0.376****	**0.288****
Interferes with home and family								
No					-	-	-	-
Yes					**-0.105****	**-0.232****	**-0.164****	**-0.253****
Age left education	-0.033	-0.021	**-0.048***	**-0.059***	-0.014	**-0.022****	-0.012	-0.007
Highest qualification								
No Qualifications	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NVQ 1	-0.334	-0.07	**-0.559****	**-0.744****	0.094	-0.022	-0.003	**-0.115***
NVQ 2	**-0.355***	**-0.342***	**-0.650****	**-1.017****	-0.011	-0.057	-0.085	**-0.143****
NVQ 3	**-0.376***	-0.16	**-0.623****	**-1.351****	-0.055	**-0.126***	-0.071	**-0.128***
NVQ 4-6	**-0.573****	**-0.426***	**-0.869****	**-1.284****	-0.08	**-0.186****	-0.053	**-0.234****
Reading score in childhood								
Low	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Medium	-0.012	-0.219	0.082	-0.214	-0.008	-0.08	0.011	-0.045
High	0.097	**-0.356***	0.218	-0.149	-0.012	**-0.114***	-0.036	-0.067

continued…

… Table 4 continued

	MALAISE				JOB SATISFACTION			
	1970 cohort aged 30		1958 cohort aged 42		1970 cohort aged 30		1958 cohort aged 42	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Maths score in childhood								
Low	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Medium	-0.124	-0.206	**-0.302****	**-0.561****	-0.07	-0.07	-0.066	-0.048
High	**-0.390***	-0.315	**-0.558****	**-0.671****	-0.103	-0.042	-0.076	0.028
Crowding in childhood								
Less than 1.5 persons/room	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1.5 or more persons/room	-0.001	0.307	**-0.235***	0.232	**0.115***	0.06	**-0.132****	-0.033
Free school meals in childhood								
No	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Yes	**0.508****	**0.309***	**0.322***	**0.370***	-0.018	0.074	-0.066	0.103
Parental interest in child's education								
Neither parent 'very interested'	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
One parent 'very interested'	-0.149	0.013	-0.102	-0.021	0.034	0.025	-0.018	-0.005
Social class at birth								
I	0.29	**-0.685***	-0.014	-0.325	0.027	-0.059	0.048	0.114
II	0.324	**-0.648***	0.028	-0.219	0.031	0.003	-0.016	0.006
III-nm	0.158	**-0.517***	0.043	-0.183	0.008	0.029	0.005	0.053
III-m	0.344	-0.421	0.095	-0.211	0.033	-0.013	0.029	-0.007
IV	0.104	-0.312	-0.063	-0.148	0.048	-0.01	0.015	0.033
V	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Age mother left education								
Under 15 years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15 or more years	-0.075	-0.089	0.028	-0.111	0.046	-0.002	-0.054	-0.009
Ethnic group								
White	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	0.349	**0.648****	-0.088	0.656	**-0.208****	-0.009	0.018	-0.007
Constant	**4.021****	**5.283****	**4.002****	**5.955****	**3.888****	**4.341****	**4.085****	**4.238****
Sample Size	5384	5724	5567	5764	4847	4213	4791	4392
R squared	0.07	0.05	0.09	0.09	0.15	0.12	0.14	0.11

***** Significant at the 5% level.
****** Significant at the 1% level.
- denotes the comparison group.

Job satisfaction

As we might expect, Malaise was negatively related to job satisfaction in all the analyses (Table 4). In other words those people expressing a greater tendency to depression were less likely to be satisfied with their current job than others. Though the relationship was slightly reduced when the other variables were entered into the model, the overall relationship was sustained pointing to an independent negative effect of Malaise on job satisfaction. The other variables that featured as statistically significant in the model were different for men and women. Thus for men, working in the public sector was *negatively* related to job satisfaction, whereas, the relationship was non significant for women. Self-employment similarly appeared to be a source of job satisfaction for men, but not for women, although this was only significant in the earlier NCDS cohort. Similarly, in NCDS the higher the occupational social class of the woman's job the more satisfied with it was she was likely to be. However, for men, there was no such relationship between job satisfaction and class of job.

In relation to age of leaving school and highest qualification, these characteristics had coefficients that were statistically significant in a *negative* direction, but only for women. In other words, the more *highly qualified* the 1970 cohort woman was, the more *dissatisfied* she was likely to be with her job.

The other characteristics predicting satisfaction were those relating to the job itself. Thus good prospects for promotion and good security all contributed to greater satisfaction for both sexes in both cohorts. Similarly interference between work and family life was negatively related to job satisfaction in analyses of both cohorts.

Depression

Malaise showed, with one important exception, the opposite picture to that of job satisfaction. One characteristic most strongly related to depression was not being at work (positive relationship). Job type did not seem to matter for men but was negatively related to Malaise for women. In other words, women working for the public sector were less depressed. The important difference in the findings for the Malaise inventory in comparison with job satisfaction concerns educational achievement and qualifications. In relation to the educational variables to do with age of leaving school, highest qualification and reading scores at 11 and 10 there was a consistent picture of *negative* relationships. In other words, the more educational achievement the cohort member had demonstrated in childhood at

school or through qualifications finally obtained, the *less likely* they were to be depressed. In the case of women, however, the more qualified they were and the more their education extended the more likely they were to be *dissatisfied* with their current jobs, despite the correlation between dissatisfaction and higher Malaise scores. Countering this apparent educational 'protector' against depression were the indications of disadvantage in childhood as measured by free school meals, which were *positively* related to Malaise for men and for women in both cohorts. In other words, those men and women who had experienced this kind of hardship as a child were more likely to be depressed as adults.

Conclusions

These results show some continuity with past findings about job satisfaction and some aspects that do not seem to have been identified in the past. First, it is clear that job satisfaction relates to characteristics of the current job and also location in the labour market: private, public sectors, self-employment and so forth. It also relates to personal characteristics differing, for example, between men and women. Similarly, there seems to be a psychological dimension, in the sense that people who are generally more depressed are more likely to be dissatisfied with their jobs.

In line with past research, quite striking gender differences were revealed by the data with men tending to favour the more career-oriented aspects of work, especially pay and promotion and women more the associational aspects but there were signs of the gap closing between the two cohorts, with women in the later 1970 cohort apparently valuing promotion prospects and job security almost as much as men. Interference with home and family life decreased job satisfaction for both sexes but more so for women.

Paradoxically, although the level of jobs in social class terms relates to satisfaction within them (at least for women), counter-intuitively, the level of education, which gives access to these higher-level occupations, relates to *dissatisfaction* with jobs – but only for women. At the same time, depression, a key component of dissatisfaction with jobs, is consistently *negatively* related to educational achievement at school and beyond. In other words, the most educated women are the *least depressed* but also likely to be the *most dissatisfied* with their jobs. This paradox is perhaps best explained in terms of relative deprivation (Wilkinson, 1996). As women's education continues to extend to higher levels, we perhaps are seeing evidence of expectations and aspirations rising above the level of the jobs available to female graduates. This means that women particularly find themselves in work, which their education suggests to them, is not at the level they would ideally want. It may well be that as

the nature of work changes in response to the expansion of qualifications, a further shift will occur in favour of job satisfaction among the most highly educated. In the meantime, we have clear evidence from this analysis that the protective value of education in relation to forestalling depression is not necessarily reflected in positive feelings about work.

Finally, the components of depression and life satisfaction are influenced by experience early on in life, most obviously educational experience, but also other characteristics of home life, especially the material circumstances of the home. A disposition towards depression is established early on and reinforced by experience in the teens where choices about whether to leave school at the minimum age of 16 and what kind of occupation to pursue will begin to crystallise. Clearly it is during this critical period of transition in the middle teens when psychological damage may occur through feelings of disappointment and failure (Bynner, 2001; Bynner and Parsons, 2002). This makes the case more strongly than ever for the new kinds of counselling services that are being put in place such as *Connexions* (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999) to help young people find the right pathways to the kinds of job that will both match their skills and be fulfilling to them (Evans and Furlong, 1997).

We need to acknowledge limitations in the data, which might have affected these results and the conclusions draw from them. The most obvious of these is the scale for measuring job satisfaction, which treats satisfaction and dissatisfaction as two poles of the same dimension.

Past research arguing for a separation could usefully be followed up in further work using these data by attempting to separate the negative from the positive aspects and constructing separate variables to represent them. In addition, in later rounds of data collection, the single scale could be replaced by two measures – one for job satisfaction and one for dissatisfaction. Other enhancements could be to include more transition and early employment variables in the analyses including youth training, on the job training, and job change, as well as the kinds of job entered in the public and private sectors and whether full-time or part-time. This would enable us to see to what extent labour market experience overlays that of early childhood and youth transition in influencing the level of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction felt. In this sense the research presented here is preliminary in offering some basic information about job satisfaction and its correlates, and in raising some tantalising questions for further research.

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